



In the Face of Gentrification: Case Study of Tehran (Behjatabad Neighborhood)*

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ABSTRACT: During the past several decades, neighborhoods have experienced gentrification phenomenon in a number of cities. Gentrification, the process of neighborhood change that results in the replacement of lower income residents with higher income ones, has altered the character of hundreds of urban neighborhoods in many North American and European cities. In this paper we state how does gentrification take place? Then we look at the causes and consequences of gentrification by reviewing the theories used to explain it and assessing their applicability to Behjatabad neighborhood. The method of research in this paper is based on documental research, observation and deep interview with new and old inhabitants in Behjatabad neighborhood. The results of this research show that gentrification cause displacement of original residents and change in the social and economic character of neighborhood.

Keywords: Gentrification, Urban Revitalization, Inner-City Neighborhoods, Behjatabad.

INTRODUCTION

Parallel to the ongoing residential transformation processes, urban renewal has become an important issue in the transformation of urban areas. Until the 1960s, urban renewal was interpreted as redevelopment involving the removal of the existing fabric and a change in the general layout of an area by the rearrangement of buildings and roads. Starting in the 1980s, urban renewal was evaluated within the context of globalization and favored new aspects such as regeneration and gentrification. As the cities expanded outwards, the inner-city areas became dilapidated and were associated with social, economic and physical problems, such as crime, delinquency and racial conflict (Fainstein, 1995; Lichfield, 1988; Özkan, 1998). On the other hand, the dynamics behind the gentrification process and its variations, according to the space in which gentrification occurs, have been

considered in several studies since the 1970s (Badcock, 1995; Beauregard, 1990; Hamnett, 1991; Lees 1996; Ley, 1996; Palen & London, 1984; Rose, 1984; Smith, 1996; Smith & Williams, 1986; Van Weesep & Musterd, 1991; Zukin, 1987). In general, the aim of these studies has been to explain the process of the upgrading occurring next to the city centers, and how this trend might spread to the surrounding areas. Gentrification encompasses a change in the physical structure; however the process has broader impacts. The original inhabitants of the inner areas are liable to be displaced unwillingly. Depending on the location of the residential neighborhoods, the gentrifiers may gain better access to urban centers and amenities. In addition, the process in total may be spontaneous, piecemeal and unplanned, even though individual moves are usually intentional. (Uzun, 2001). If gentrification continues, this re-urbanization of the middle and professional classes presents a historic opportunity to reverse central-city decline and to further other widely accepted societal goals. Many cities encounter fiscal problems due to migration of higher income households to the suburbs and concentration of disadvantaged (poor

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and less educated) households in the urban core. These problems could be ameliorated if wealthier households increasingly settle within central cities, raising taxable income and property values and stimulating retail activity and sales tax proceeds (Miesowski & Mills, 1993). An increasing middle class in central-city neighborhoods, to the degree that it includes White households, could help eliminate urban areas and, eventually, their school districts (Lee et al., 1985). Moreover, the concentrated poverty that is thought to diminish the life chances of the poor might be reduced if middle-income residents settle in formerly depressed neighborhoods (Wilson, 1987). Although the rhetoric of resistance sometimes expresses class and racial resentments, the principal concern is usually that lower-income households are vulnerable to displacement led by redevelopment projects or rising rents (Lin, 1995; Robinson, 1995).

Brief Contextual Notes on Gentrification

In 1964, urban geographer Ruth Glass first coined the term 'gentrification' in her study of London to mention the social character change. She explains it as the process of middle- and upper-class households moving into distressed working-class neighborhoods, upgrading the derelict housing stock, and eventually displacing the working-class residents, thereby changing the social character of the neighborhood (Glass, 1964). For example, some observers describe gentrification as the rehabilitation of working-class or derelict housing into housing for middle-class residents, or as the process of higher-income households moving into neighborhoods suffering from systematic outmigration, disinvestment, or neglect (Atkinson, 2002; Wyly & Hammel, 1999). Neil Smith described gentrification as a process that happens in the residential housing market when working class and derelict housing is renovated, turning into the transformation of the area into middle-class neighborhoods (Smith, 1986).

Not all definitions of gentrification encompass the displacement of the incumbent, lower-income residents. Some observers argue that displacement is not a necessary outcome of gentrification in condition that original residents cannot afford to move elsewhere or are attached to the neighborhood, or if higher-income households are capable of occupying vacant properties or move into newly constructed developments (Vigdor, 2002). (Levy, Comey & Padilla, 2006)

Since then the definition has been broadened to focus more on capital exchange, as Lees states: "Gentrification... is a cyclical process driven largely, but not completely by investment flows" (Lees, 2000, p. 398).

For the purposes of this study we are concerned with the displacement and exclusion of lower-paid workers from residential areas in case study by higher income earners and the impact that this issue, or may cause, on the neighborhoods and this will guide the enquiry (Moore, 2009).

Under our definition, gentrification has three specific conditions which all must be met:

1. Displacement of original residents
2. Physical upgrading of the neighborhood, particularly of housing stock
3. Change in neighborhood character.

Characteristics of Gentrification

The phenomenon has been seen primarily as an inner city process in which two key elements are generally considered: "First, the class-based colonization of cheap residential neighborhoods and, secondly, a reinvestment in the physical housing stock" (Atkinson, 2003, P. 2343). Regarding to physical change, the primary feature of gentrification is the redevelopment of houses that have hitherto been regarded as working class dwellings. In a physical look, there is no doubt that gentrification results in an improvement in the physical fabric of the area's housing. It also has the potential to improve the economic fabric, as the incoming wealth is capable of supporting businesses such as specialty food outlets or specialist businesses designed to support the growth in home restoration (in Phillips, 2004, P. 24). Rofe (2003) in Sydney also considers the gentrifiers' support for ethnic eateries, usually Thai, Indian and Chinese. However, gentrifiers may also influence the local economy in negative ways contributing to the omission of corner shops, local schools, doctors, public transport and other local services and facilities. The drivers for gentrification are still a matter for debate (Badcock, 1989; Bourassa, 1993; Smith, 1996a). (Claire Freeman; Christine Cheyne, 2008)

Basically, the changing lifestyles and cultural preferences were expressed through old houses, especially in the inner-city, being bought and refurbished. Changes occurring in communication technology and the creation of an information society began to change the spatial structure of cities as well. While the financial and administrative functions and the producer services moved to the city centre, industrial production decentralized (Beauregard, 1986; Griffith, 1995; Ley, 1996; Smith, 1986). Parallel to the general changes mentioned above and in close association with social polarization, residential transformation took place in the abandoned and dilapidated old inner-city neighborhoods through



urban renewal and upgrading processes. The residential transformation was included of both reinvasion and residential revitalization. Through reinvasion, upper status groups displaced lower status groups in inner-city areas leading to urban renewal and rehabilitation. In residential revitalization, on the other hand, two processes were witnessed: incumbent upgrading and gentrification. Through gentrification, middle, and upper middle-income

groups move into a neighborhoods, renovate homes and displace the indigenous residents. Gentrification also involves the expression of socio-cultural preferences in living space, in addition to the considered physical change (Holcomb & Beauregard, 1981). (Uzun, Nil, 2001). In the following table the characteristics of the gentrification process in several countries are conveyed.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Gentrification Process in Several Countries

Characteristics of the gentrification process	country										
	England	USA	Canada	Australia	The Netherlands	Mexico	South Africa	Hungary	Finland	France	Spain
location											
Inner-city close to centre	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*
Historical centre					*	*					
Initiator											
Individuals (spontaneous)	*	*	*	*	*		*			*	
Government	*				*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Non-governmental organisation									*		
Stating period											
1960s				*							
1970s	*	*	*		*					*	
1980s						*		*	*		*
1990s							*				
New residents											
New middle class households	*	*	*	*	*	*	*			*	
Wealthy households		*						*	*		*
Artists			*		*						
Former residents							*				

(Modified from Uzun 2001, p. 56)

As rehabilitation becomes more apparent, prices escalate and displacement occurs in force. New residents are less tolerating the existing social service facilities that serve homeless populations or other low-income needs; as well as industrial and other uses they view as undesirable. Original residents are displaced along with

their industries, commercial enterprises, faith institutions and cultural traditions.



The Consequences of Gentrification

Displacement, Loss of Affordable Housing and Homelessness

While city development has often been characterized by forced removal, the gentrification literature has been concerned specifically with the market removal of residents either through quickly inflating rents and house prices as well as through landlord harassment to secure vacant possession (Pitt, 1977). Residents, finding that friends and family have been priced out of a location, may follow their social networks to maintain the support offered by them (Williams, 1988). An early large-scale US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) study on displacement defined the phenomenon as occurring where any household is forced to move from its residence by conditions which affect the dwelling or its immediate surroundings, and which: 1. are beyond the household's reasonable ability to control or prevent; 2. occur in spite of the household's having met all previously imposed conditions of occupancy; and 3. make continued occupancy by that household impossible, hazardous, or unaffordable (Grier & Grier, 1978, P. 8).

Community Conflict, Eviction and Crime

Gentrification has also been linked to 'social displacement' in which the constitution of the community is altered as the area is gentrified (Chernoff, 1980). In other words, as an area is gentrified, the 'voice' of the area increasingly becomes that of middle-class and professional households which are more consonant with the opinion of the local authority, pro-business as well as encouraging the removal of unsightly housing and social problems such as street-begging. As areas become more fully gentrified they fade from view as problematic spaces and become established middle-class enclaves.

Population Loss and Changing Service Provision

Gentrifying areas appear to lose population overall leading to the charge that gentrifiers 'under-occupy' their property (Wagner, 1995; Bailey & Robertson, 1997). The conversion of subdivided units into larger units which are suitable for more affluent households is one explanation for this process, as is the more general displacement of poorer groups. However, while some studies have argued that greater numbers of the middle classes in the city are beneficial due to the fiscal boost they represent, this has been contested by other research showing that most gentrifiers already live in the city. Further, research has suggested that gentrifiers represent an articulate and

vigorous lobbying group who generally take more from the city coffers than they are supposed to contribute. This can be manifested through amenity forums, local business groups and residents' associations seeking to direct local political agendas and funding towards their own localities (Gale, 1984). Gentrification of one neighborhood can also have price-shadowing (increasing rents and prices in adjacent areas) and other policy effects on surrounding neighborhoods.

The Positive Impacts of Gentrification

The research evidence on the benefits of gentrification is significantly sparser than that of its ill effects. There are perhaps two important issues to point out on the coverage of these effects.

Renewal, Social Mix and Poverty Deconcentration

Perhaps the most obvious upside to gentrification is the rehabilitation of the physical fabric of the housing in neighborhoods and, in many cases it is observed that; architecturally desirable areas have been upgraded. In the UK, this outcome was achieved partially through housing grants and state-sponsored gentrification (Hamnett, 1973) though this link has been broken for some time since means-testing and occurrence of other rule changes. In other cases gentrification and rehabilitation have taken place without state sponsorship, though the lack of tenure neutrality in housing policy more generally makes this harder to disentangle. The general benefits identified through these processes of renewal may also have wider impacts. For instance, the physical rehabilitation of neighborhoods by new homeowners allows improvement, often without direct public subsidy. On the other hand, the change in the image of neighborhoods associated with renewal may invite further investment and alter preconceptions about the social ecology of an area. However, while planners have often thought of gentrification as a positive force in these respects it must be recognized that this is often achieved through the displacement of existing residents not benefiting from these changes.

Property Values, Tax Revenues and Local Services

Few studies have alluded to increased property values as a benefit of gentrification though clearly it is for those owning their homes (but see Sumka, 1979). This point has been made sometimes by identifying areas of gentrification through property price increases. Eventually, such increases represent an opportunity or social cost depending on which particular stakeholders



are involved. Even where more deprived owners decide to 'cash-in' they are likely to be faced with high prices elsewhere which at least match such gains. As observed earlier, it may also be that those who exit do so because they feel disenfranchised by the nature of local social changes.

METHODOLOGY

In this article according to the goals of research, qualitative research method is used. For understanding better the social phenomena and researching about the small group with deep understanding, it is better to use qualitative research method. So in this paper, observation and deep interview are used. By deep interview with old and new residents, neighborhood changing trend is better understood. Sampling method is snowball sampling and the numbers of interview are limited by theoretical saturation method. So 9 persons who have lived in this complex since 1973 and 5 persons who lived Bahjatabad before it was ruined and they had to move to 13th Aban Alley are interviewed.

Formation Process of Behjatabad Complex

The current location of Behjatabad neighborhood is 6th district of Tehran in Karimkhan street. Till 1966, Behjatabad was a rundown area for the poor and the residents were living with walls made of tin. The commencement for construction of sky scrapers was from the end of 1950s by imitating western countries. These tall buildings were constructed by the objective of creating residential units appropriate for average and low income classes, however in action, only average income class could afford to reside in them due to high cost of their finished price (Evaluation of Residential High-Building, vision of residents and managers, mass housing).

This complex with the built-up area of 62000 sq. m. in 14 blocks of 12 stories has encompassed 396 units. Besides the blocks, in Behjatabad there is a separate building including of a large hall for a bank and clinic and a building for the management and a buildings for commercial activities. The area of Behjatabad land lot which was calculated by transferring the shack dwellers to 9th Aban Alley (currently known as 13th Aban) was 28945 sq. m., approximately 5600 sq. m. of that was dedicated to buildings, about 14300 sq. m. to parking and access ways and about 9000 sq. m. of that to green spaces. The area of residential units and other buildings is about 80000 sq. m. (Bahjatabad and Saei Complex, 1973). The complex has an outdoor pool with a dimension of

15×33 m built for use of residents which is located in the middle area of the complex. Prior to Revolution, there was a sport club inside the complex for the leisure time of residents with the table tennis and billiard facilities. In the beginning years of construction (1970s) the residents were preparing their daily needs inside the complex. The grocery store, laundry, bakery and Tejarat Bank branch are the current land-uses available in the complex. Also, Behjatabad fruit and grocery market and Ghods chain store near the complex were great places for preparing other needs of the residents.

The Price and Cost for Execution of This Project

The price and cost for execution of this project which was not determined at the beginning of these two plans and was postponed to the end of the project was announced in 1970 as bellow:

First type: 5-bedroom residential units with the common and private area of 241 sq. m. for the price of 2734000 rials.

Second type: 4-bedroom residential units with the common and private area of 212 sq. m. for the price of 2470000 rials.

Third type: 2-bedroom residential units with the common and private area of 96 sq. m. for the price of 1170000 rials (Ibid).

In order to assign these buildings, 50% of the price was received in cash and 50% with the 12-year installments with 9% interest. From the required credit about 400000000 rials of that was provided by the mortgage bank and it was given to the Housing Organization (Ibid). In 1972, the price of 3-bedroom residential units was 2750000 rials, and the 2-bedroom units were 2500000 rials (derived from interview with resident).

The analysis process was conducted in two steps which included selection of the main criteria for cognition of the gentrification phenomenon and analyzing that in Behjatabad neighborhood. Selection of main criteria was done based on theoretical basics and review of the experiences for creation of such phenomenon in the world (developed countries and underdevelopment countries) (Table 1). There are different criteria for investigating the changes of this phenomenon in residential neighborhoods. Some of the information and statistics related to these changes can be achieved via census. Unfortunately, this data is gathered with difficulty; however they can be measured easily. Some of the criteria investigated about the gentrification phenomenon are included of investigation of different outcomes of gentrification phenomenon in Behjatabad neighborhood.

Investigation and analysis of outcomes occurred in



case study can help to better understanding of gentrification phenomenon. The outcomes of gentrification which include two positive and negative aspects encompass economical, social, physical and political dimensions. When the gentrification phenomenon happened in Behjatabad neighborhood in 1970s, it had positive and negative consequences. Prior to construction of residential complexes, the area was occupied by shack dwellers. These people were in a very low level in terms of income and have given an undesired face to this region. Therefore, one of the positive aspects of gentrification phenomenon was preventing concentration of poverty in the neighborhood. Removal of these sheds and transmission of the people to other places has decreased concentration of poverty in the area, although it has led to compulsory displacement of primary residents of this area and transmission of them to 9th Aban Alley. On the other hand, the rise in the price of estates and rent has led to increase in the land's added value in the region which has placed residents with higher income; which this has led to creation of new commercial occupations and activities and the change in the face of this area by absorbing diverse land-uses.



Fig.1. Behjatabad Slums, 1960 (Before the Gentrification Phenomenon)



Fig.2. Behjatabad Complex, 1972 (After the Gentrification Phenomenon)

DISCUSSION

The process of analysis was conducted in two steps which included selection of the main criteria for cognition of the gentrification phenomenon and analyzing that in Behjatabad neighborhood.

We use qualitative analysis for showing change of neighborhood character by using deep interview. For the purposes, we find 9 persons who have lived in this complex since 1973 and 5 persons who lived Bahjatabad before it was ruined and they had to move to 13th Aban Alley. The new residents of Bahjatabad neighborhood had high social status with high income such as some senior staffs in bank, Housing and Urban Development organization and other Public offices and some Ministeries.

Under our definition, gentrification has three specific conditions which all must be met:

1. Displacement of original residents
2. Physical upgrading of the neighborhood, particularly of housing stock
3. Change in neighborhood character.

Selection of main criteria was done based on theoretical basics and review of the experiences for creation of such phenomenon in the world (developed countries and underdevelopment countries). There are different criteria for investigating the changes of this phenomenon in residential neighborhoods. Some of the information and statistics related to these changes can be achieved via census. Unfortunately, this data is gathered with difficulty; however they can be measured easily. Some of the criteria investigated about the gentrification phenomenon are included in the investigation of different outcomes of gentrification phenomenon in Behjatabad neighborhood.

Behjatabad complex was built at the settlement place of shack dwellers leading to 9th Aban Alley in the Shah Abdolazim road with the best facilities and installations of that time by the foreign companies during the ending years of 1960s and the beginning of 1970s and firstly it was going to be assigned to teachers. However, by considering their good quality and the rise in the price of residential units of this complex, the dominant residents were from average to high income and affluent class of the society. So original residents of Bahjatabad neighborhood had to leave their neighborhood and migrate to 9th Aban Alley because of unaffordable housing cost.

During this period, the number of governmental offices and commercial centers increased day by day. A little earlier, some installations were settled in Behjatabad lands including of the Water Organization, Oil Ministry, Poly-Technique University, Fine Arts Faculty, Blood Transfusion Center, Firoozgar Hospital, the hospital



known as Russian Hospital, two churches, two Christian schools and several educational centers (kariman, 1986).

CONCLUSION

Investigation and analysis of outcomes occurred in case study can help for better understanding of gentrification phenomenon. Three factors conveyed in the discussion are present in the Bahjatabad neighborhood; most of original residents moved to 13th Aban alley, new residents with higher social status were replaced the old residents, housing stock was changed and some facilities were moved into the complexes such as bank, grocery, laundry, bakery, sport club, etc. then the facilities and equipments of complex caused increasing land price. So gentrification cause displacement of original residents and changed the social and economic character of Bahjatabad neighborhood. The outcomes of gentrification which include two positive and negative aspects encompass economical, social, physical and political dimensions. When the gentrification phenomenon happened in Behjatabad neighborhood in 1970s, it had positive and negative consequences. Prior to construction of residential complexes, the area was occupied by shack dwellers. These people were in a very low level in terms of income and have given an undesired face to this region. Therefore, one of the positive aspects of gentrification phenomenon was preventing concentration of poverty in the neighborhood. Removal of these sheds and transfer of the people to other places has decreased concentration of poverty in the area, although it has led to compulsory displacement of primary residents of this area and transfer of them to 9th Aban Alley. On the other hand, the rise in the price of estates and rent has led to increase in the land's added value in the region which has placed residents with higher income; which this has led to creation of new commercial occupations and activities and the change in the face of this area by absorbing diverse land-uses, then only rich people could afford to live there. Therefore it caused social mix. Since rich people lived near poor people and neighborhood regeneration happened, better neighborhood was created. So gentrification phenomenon can have negative and positive influences on the neighborhood. So gentrification phenomenon causes the improvement of neighborhood and changes the social status of the inhabitants by attracting some facility and equipment for the inhabitants and increasing the land price.



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